



Services for Sons and Daughters of Vietnam Veterans

Overview

This Factsheet provides information about the types of programs, counselling services, information and support activities available for sons and daughters of Vietnam veterans through the VVCS – Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service.

Background

In response to findings of the Vietnam Veterans Health Study (1998), VVCS has implemented a number of initiatives for sons and daughters of Vietnam veterans.

These initiatives have increased the VVCS' capacity to address mental health needs of sons and daughters of Vietnam veterans to reduce suicide risk through:

- Developing partnerships with local services to ensure that sons and daughters receive appropriate care;
- Supporting sons and daughters self-help initiatives; and
- Projects which aim to increase personal strengths, coping skills and resilience of sons and daughters.

Can a parent's war-related stress impact on their children?

While family life has been positive for the majority of sons and daughters of Vietnam veterans, there are some for whom family life and family relationships have been challenging.

A number of veterans, after returning from war service, experienced higher than normal stress in their daily lives associated with their war experience. This may have led to poor problem-solving, poor conflict resolution and low self-confidence which impacted on their capacity to be a successful parent. Some continue to experience mental health problems complicated by alcohol or drug abuse, anxiety or depression.

It must be emphasised that the many Vietnam veterans have successfully sought help, recovered and maintain good relationships with their children and grandchildren.

Living with a parent experiencing these types of problems can have an impact on children as they are growing up. Some sons and daughters have experienced a difficult family life leading to feelings of social and emotional isolation, sadness, anger, aggression, shame, disappointment, a low sense of safety, self-blame and feeling overly responsible for other people. These feelings and attitudes can lead to relationship and mental health difficulties.

Services for Sons and Daughters of Vietnam Veterans, *continued*

Some sons and daughters require support (e.g. information, referral to appropriate services, counselling) in their efforts to change these feelings, attitudes and behaviours. Others have developed their own ways of coping with the kinds of problems they may have encountered.

VVCS has been consulting with sons and daughters in both situations to work out the best ways to develop mental health promotion activities that will increase their strengths, skills and ability to bounce back. When consulted, sons and daughters have shared their positive and negative experiences with VVCS and have clearly expressed what works and what does not work.

Who can use VVCS?

All sons and daughters of Vietnam veterans regardless of age with psychological, emotional and social needs arising from the impact of their parents' operational or warlike service.

How can VVCS help?

VVCS can assist sons and daughters to get access to a range of services, activities and programs that may be of assistance, such as:

- Individual counselling
- After-hours telephone crisis counselling through Veterans Line
- Case management services including referrals to other services
- Psychiatric assessments
- Group programs for common mental health issues such as depression, anxiety and anger
- Information, education and self-help resources.

Information, education and self-help resources

Sons and daughters can contact VVCS individually to find out information or to get advice. VVCS understands that many sons and daughters may not need or want counselling or therapy, but sometimes they do want information about services available in the community, or other specific advice associated with their parent's war-related experience.

VVCS has resources available including brochures, books and other written materials for sons and daughters which might help them understand their situation.

Free confidential counselling

Counselling is available from VVCS for sons or daughters both in a crisis situation and just to allow them to work through emotional and behavioural problems which they wish to change. VVCS employs experienced counsellors who are available for sons and daughters at each of the VVCS centres. VVCS also contracts counsellors through its Outreach Program, available for sons and daughters who live in rural and remote areas.

VVCS counselling is strictly confidential, within legal limits.

Services for Sons and Daughters of Vietnam Veterans, *continued*

Please see *VCS01 General Information about VVCS – Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service* for further details about the counselling services provided by VVCS, confidentiality and client rights and responsibilities.

Psychiatric assessments

If a VVCS counsellor assesses that a son or daughter requires further specialist assessment, VVCS can arrange for a psychiatric assessment. VVCS will pay for a maximum of five assessment sessions.

Groups

VVCS centres across Australia can offer group programs that may include topics such as anger management, assertiveness, communication, problem-solving, developing relationships and prevention of mental health issues.

These groups require a certain number of participants and may not be available in every region. They are run at different times of the year. Sons and daughters should contact their nearest VVCS centre to register their interest in a group program.

VVCS is also able to provide up-to-date information about relevant group programs that are being organised by other agencies. VVCS can assist sons and daughters by putting them in touch with the best program to suit their current needs.

Mental health promotion activities for sons and daughters of Vietnam veterans

VVCS has activities that aim to improve the access that sons and daughters of Vietnam veterans currently have to a range of mental health promotion services. The VVCS is developing partnerships with local services to ensure that sons and daughters receive appropriate care and are aware of local services that can meet their needs.

Referrals to VVCS

Referrals to VVCS can be made by:

- Sons and daughters themselves
- Other health, welfare and educational professionals with sons' and daughters' consent.

If you are unsure whether you are eligible for VVCS services, please contact your local VVCS office for information and advice.

*If you use a mobile phone, see the *Note* at the end of this document.

Services for Sons and Daughters of Vietnam Veterans, *continued*

Referrals from VVCS

VVCS has developed strong connections with government and community-based agencies in most regions of Australia. If needed, VVCS can arrange referrals to agencies that provide specialist counselling (e.g. for drug and alcohol problems and other addictions).

Other counselling options

Alternatively, sons and daughters can refer themselves to counselling services that may be available in their region. Access to counselling can be obtained through:

- Referral by a GP to a psychologist under the 'Better Access to Mental Health' or 'Better Outcomes' Initiative
- Local community health services
- State health department drug and alcohol and mental health services
- Specific youth services, and
- A range of agencies that are available in each State and Territory, such as Centacare, Anglicare and Relationships Australia (which can be reached on 1300 364 277 for the cost of a local call*).

*If you use a mobile phone, see the Note at the end of this document.

If sons and daughters prefer to use a telephone counselling service they can contact counsellors at the following phone numbers:

- Kids Help Line: 1800 551 800
- Lifeline: 131 114.*

*If you use a mobile phone, see the Note at the end of this document.

Other counselling organisations can be located on the Internet through:

- www.reachout.com.au
- www.lifeline.org.au
- www.kidshelpline.com.au
- www.beyondblue.org.au
- www.relationships.com.au

Community based self-help and support groups

Sons and daughters can also join a range of self-help groups that may be available in the community, such as:

- Alcoholics Anonymous or Narcotics Anonymous for those affected by substance abuse problems
- AI Anon or AI Ateen if affected by a family member's substance abuse
- GROW for those affected by mental health problems
- Association for the Friends and Relatives of the Mentally Ill (AFRMI) and Children of Parents with a Mental Illness (COPMI) if affected by a family member's mental health issues.

Services for Sons and Daughters of Vietnam Veterans, *continued*

There are many other self-help groups that may be available for specific issues such as eating disorders, grief, a range of medical conditions, parenting, employment or financial issues, stress management and so on.

Doctors, community health services and VVCS staff can provide contacts for self-support groups in each region of Australia.

Other Factsheets

Other Factsheets related to this topic include:

- *General information about VVCS – Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service: VCS 01*
- *Combat Experience in Vietnam and its Effects: VCS 02*
- *Effects of military-related stress on the civilian work environment: VCS 03*
- *Effects of military-related stress on relationships: VCS 04*
- *Domestic Violence: VCS 05*
- *PTSD: General Information: VCS 06*
- *Education Schemes MRC 47*
- *The Long Tan Bursary: GS 13*
- *Vietnam Veterans' Children Support Program: CSP 01*

VVCS contact phone numbers

Contact VVCS by calling: **1800 011 046***

During business hours – connects you to the nearest VVCS centre. There are 15 centres located across Australia.

After hours – connects you to Veterans Line, the after-hours crisis counselling telephone service.

Alternatively, you can contact your nearest VVCS centre direct:

Adelaide Telephone: (08) 7422 4500	Maroochydore Telephone: (07) 5479 3992
Albury/Wodonga Telephone: (02) 6056 1341	Melbourne Telephone: (03) 8640 8700
Brisbane Telephone: (07) 3303 9433	Newcastle Telephone: (02) 4915 0420
Canberra Telephone: (02) 6225 4620	Perth Telephone: (08) 6461 7800
Darwin Telephone: (08) 8927 9411	Southport Telephone: (07) 5630 0204
Hobart Telephone: (03) 6221 6777	Sydney Telephone: (02) 9761 5000
Launceston Telephone: (03) 6331 7500	Townsville Telephone: (07) 4723 9155
Lismore Telephone: (02) 6622 4479	

Services for Sons and Daughters of Vietnam Veterans, *continued*

More information

All DVA Factsheets are available from DVA offices, and on the DVA website at www.dva.gov.au

You can phone DVA for the cost* of a local call on 133 254 or free call 1800 555 254 if you are outside a major city.

Note: *Use a normal landline phone if you can. Mobile phone calls may cost you more. Local call rates vary depending on your phone service provider.

You can send an email to DVA at: GeneralEnquiries@dva.gov.au

You can get more help from any DVA office.